

2. Active Sports and Recreation Opportunities in King County: Assets, Needs, and Recommendations for Preservation, Growth, and Enhancement

Field Sports and Recreation

Aquatic Sports and Recreation

Open Water Sports and Recreation

Gym / Court Sports and Recreation

Club Court Sports and Recreation

Outdoor Adventure Sports and Recreation

Sky Sports and Recreation

Bicycle Sports and Recreation

Skate and Board Sports and Recreation

Running Sports and Recreation

Ice Sports and Recreation

Snow Sports and Recreation

Hobby Sports and Recreation

Other Sports and Recreation

Introduction

In this section, the Commission profiles nearly 100 different sports and recreation opportunities available to the citizens of King County. The purpose of this effort is to celebrate the rich diversity of opportunities that are available and recognize the community-based organizations that make those opportunities a reality. The Commission believes that the region needs to be more proactive at embracing all of these opportunities as part of a complete public parks, sports, and recreation system even though most of these “services” are not directly provided and/or organized by the jurisdictions. The community-based organizations, associations, and individuals that manage and organize most of these opportunities need to be viewed as equal partners within the regional parks, sports, and recreation system. The financial contributions, sweat equity, and overall passion of these groups for their respective sports are among the most valuable resources we could ultimately develop and leverage. Throughout this report you will find recommendations that are rooted in the empowerment of these groups to partner with the public investments in our parks, sports, and recreation system and ultimately be the foundation of our new renaissance.

The major themes that the Commission hopes to convey in this section are:

- **There are well documented and researched individual, social, and economic benefits to a quality parks, sports, and recreation system.**
- **The community-based sports and recreation system is very diverse, robust, and passionate.**
- **Most of the sports and recreation infrastructure or programming needs can be met by the community-based organizations when they are empowered by jurisdictions.**
- **The variety of opportunities contained within the parks, sports, and recreation system is a key indicator of its value.**

Section Details

Benefits of Parks, Sports, and Recreation

The section opens with a brief overview of the benefits of parks, sports, and recreation. Although many have a broader understanding, there are still an overwhelming number of people that think that parks, sports, and recreation is only about fun and entertainment. The Commission profiles the interconnected benefits that make parks, sports, and recreation one of the key components of a livable community. These “benefits” are listed for each sport throughout the remaining chapters.

Sports Profiling Chapters

The rest of the section contains nearly 100 sports profiling chapters that are separated into 14 categories. Each of these chapters essentially contain the same four components; a history of the sport or recreation opportunity, in general; how the sport or recreation opportunity exists in King County, the challenges facing the sport or recreation opportunity, and each sport or recreation opportunities local and national governing bodies, contacts, or other resources.

History of the Sports

Why did the Commission choose to cover so much of the history of each sport or recreation opportunity? Simple, these histories are very important in understanding the sports’ heritage and, ultimately, their value in connecting our region with cultures and people from our past. It was a very enlightening exercise to learn the origins of many of these sports and how they have survived, many of them, through centuries and how important it is for our region’s parks, sports, and recreation system to protect the opportunities for future generations to experience them, as well. For the younger sports whose history lies in the last couple of decades or the emerging sports born with the Generation X, it is important that the region also protects these opportunities and empower these sports to incubate their own legacies.

Sports in King County

It was also important to show how the sports are organized or otherwise made available in King County. From organized team sports to individual recreation opportunities, it is important to understand how the enthusiasts interact and how the opportunities are managed. The Commission made every attempt to determine the total numbers of citizens participating in any given sport, but the

localized nature of any given sports organization and the plethora of individual sports often made it difficult to determine just how many people are doing what kinds of sports and where. Rest assured that hundreds of thousands of citizens take part in hundreds of different kinds of sports and recreation everyday and the very existence of this many sports and recreation opportunities in King County show that it is a vast part of our region’s everyday life.

Challenges Facing Sports and Recreation Opportunities

As part of the community resource of identifying all of these opportunities, the Commission also wanted to create a framework for protecting those opportunities. In many cases, there are concrete infrastructure and programming needs that must be addressed for many of these sports in order to preserve, enhance, and grow the opportunities in our region. In some cases there are simpler barriers that do not have regional solutions. The Commission reached out to each of these sports and attempted to identify challenges that could be addressed with the direct assistance of a new regional governance and the indirect assistance of a new regional vision. The Commission realizes that the current funding crisis makes new investments appear to be a luxury, but this exercise is very important in laying down a vision for future components and design elements of a state of the art parks, sports, and recreation system that fully addresses the active needs and desires of its citizens. The Commission sees these recommendations as a “to do” list for the migration to a sports, parks, and recreation renaissance.

Sports and Recreation Resources

On a more practical note, the Commission felt each of these chapters should contain contact information so that the audience of this report can further explore any of the opportunities that the Commission has profiled. Included in those resources are any clinics, showcases, or other regularly scheduled events that are available to get people on the field, in the pool, on the lake, in the air, on the ice, in the gym, on the dirt, on the snow, or otherwise exposed to any given opportunity.